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Academic Writing

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Topic: The changing American family

Subject 1 what is a family

Subject 2 Children of gay fathers

Subject3 Cohabitation instead of marriage

Introduction

Family is a topic that plays a part in everyone’s life. The meaning of family ranges from its diversity, its impact on same sex relationships, to its connection with people living in the same household unmarried. Furthermore, Pauline Erera, an associate professor at the University Of Washington School Of Social Work, has written extensively about family diversity: continuity and change in the contemporary family (p 416). In Erera’s studies, she addresses a topic, “What is a family?” Another professor, Robert L. Barret, professor of counseling at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a psychologist, a gay father and a grandfather of five, elaborates on Children of gay fathers (p. 409). Lastly, James Q. Wilson, who served as the Shattuck professor of government at Harvard University and the James Collins professor of management and public policy at UCLA, discusses Cohabitation instead of marriage (429). Family can be described as a set of primary relationships-biologically, emotionally, socially, economically and legally.

Body

The family is not simply a social institution. It is an ideological construct laden with symbolism and with a history and politics of its own. “The groupings that are called families are socially constructed rather than naturally or biologically given. In studying families we need to keep clear the distinctions between the institutionalized families, the ideology of the family and the lives of actual families. Although social and economic forces shape family life, our understanding of family is shaped by the evolving patterns of the actual families around us. One early definition of the family was that offered by Erera. The family is a social group characterized by common residence economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults (420). Given the diversity of families, a single all-encompassing definition of “family” is impossible to achieve. Families are defined in a variety of ways depending on the purposes and circumstances, Although traditionalists have held blood ties or consanguinity to be a defining characteristic of the family, others argue that we should define families according to the attachments and intimacy that individuals have toward significant people in their lives.

Children of gay fathers are just as normal as any other children in the world, some are intellectually brilliant and some battle to get through school, some are exemplary students and some are constantly in trouble. In thinking about the children of gay fathers, it is essential to recognize that many of them have experienced the divorce of their parents others have grown up in single-parents homes, and still others have been caught in major crossfires between their parents, grandparents, and perhaps their communities over the appropriateness of gay men serving in the father role. The parenting styles of gay fathers are not markedly different from those of other single fathers, but gay fathers try to create a more stable home environment and more positive relationships with their children than traditional heterosexual parents. Homosexual fathers differed from their heterosexual counterparts in providing more nurturing and in having less traditional parenting attitudes in general; investigators have found that gay fathers feel an additional responsibility to provide effective fathering because they know their homosexuality cause others to examine their parenting style more closely, (410)

If marriage is designed to help solve a society’s need to maintain a family , and if modern societies such as ours have created ways of raising children that are independent of family life, then family life ought not to be very important. Children are not always raise by their parents, as a matter of fact most children spend more time with their nanny that they do with their parents. Cohabitation creates a problem that many people will find hard to solve, because people are free to leave cohabitation, therefore in many cases; neither the man nor the woman has any strong incentives to invest heavily in the union. Cohabitating couples in the United States tend to keep separate bank accounts and divide up the expenses of their lives together. Cohabitation ordinarily does not last very long because individuals involve in these kinds of relationship are not always in it for the long run. In comparison to an article, The Changing Institution of Marriage: explains that cohabitation “has become part of the pathway toward marriage”. Robert states that marriage is no longer the nearly universal setting for childbearing that it was a half century ago (411). Long ago marriage had strict meaning. For example, there was no living together with another person without vows being made, for it was considered “shacking”. Also, having children prior to marriage is an issue that was not exemplified long ago. Over the years Robert reports to his readers that institutionalized marriage is no longer what is occurring in today’s society. His article has fair interpretation because he uses research from other studies, label marriages clearly, and describes how it has shaped American marriage today.

James Q Wilson offers a contrasting opinion on the definition of marriage; Wilson gives a darker assessment of the union of marriage, than both Erera and Barret. Marriage is a socially arranged solution for the problem of getting people to stay together and care for children that the mere desire for children and the sex that makes the children possible, does not solve. The problem of marriage today is that we imagine that its benefits have been offset by social arrangements, such as welfare payment, community tolerance and professional help for children, that makes marriage unnecessary. But as we have already seen, the advantages of marriage-personal health, longer lives, and better children –remain great. The advantage of cohabitation is mostly illusory, but it is an illusion that is growing in its appeal. (432)

Defining a family can be very complex. Family can be described as a group of people socially constructed and biologically constructed together. It can be a bond between not just heterosexual individuals but as well as homosexuals. Furthermore, family links together with cohabitation in the sense that it allows individuals to live legally together without commitment or vows being enforced. In the past family was mostly define my blood relation but as time changes and society knowledge of the term evolve, we have come to learn that there is much more to family than just blood relation. A family has to be able take care of each other financially, emotionally and socially. In other words a family has to ensure that all its members are well taken care of, in every aspect of life. As human beings we all have different opinions of what is morally acceptable for families, however at the end of the day every family is entitled to their own options and definition of what their family should be like, therefore whatever the definition of one’s family is, respect it and let us learn to live in love and unity with each other.

Work Cited

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